

Mayor's Report
Tuesday, December 2, 2014
Deborah G. Owens

It has been a busy couple of weeks since our last City Commission meeting and my last report. I was happy that during this time I had the opportunity to welcome a new business to Battle Creek – MedExpress, located at 25 E. Columbia Avenue, a new urgent care facility. MedExpress is a state-of-the-art, high-quality, convenient option for treating most non-life threatening injuries and illnesses. Additionally, I participated in the ground-breaking for the new multi-purpose room for The Salvation Army, located at 400 Capital Ave. NE. This facility will provide a chapel and offer many amenities to families and children of our area. Thousands of meals are served at our Salvation Army monthly, along with after-school programs, provision of shelter and clothing to those in difficulties, along with helping to fund addiction programs, to name only a few.

As we move forward in our most sincere efforts to make Battle Creek more “business friendly,” I met with our city manager, Rebecca Fleury, and two established local contractors who have been in our City for many years. We discussed issues of importance affecting their operations, and operations shared by others, to better understand the concerns. The ultimate goal is to work more cooperatively with the City of Battle Creek; seeing our relationship as a “two-way street.” City Manager Fleury is eager to make certain that our City is indeed “business friendly” and a City where businesses wish to locate and/or grow. As such, she has begun looking at the processes currently in place with the Inspection Division and Code Enforcement. Work will continue in this review, followed by an opportunity in January 2015, for the City and our customers (contractors, builders, realtors, business owners, etc.) to meet to acquire a further understanding of the problems that seem to plague our City in this regard.

On Nov. 21, 2014, I presented to Project 20/20, Intentionality Forum, on how the City looked at “turning outward” in the process we used for the search for the city manager. I was able to address the importance of citizen involvement to make certain that we not only provided many opportunities, but shared on the importance of this input; what we learned/gained from the experience; how we

worked together with staff; and how the dynamics of our “turning outward” has changed the manner in which this Commission governs.

Wednesday, Nov. 26, was proclaimed “Sojourner Truth Day” in Battle Creek, and as such a ceremony was held on Nov. 23, at the Second Missionary Baptist Church commemorating the life and legacy of this incredible woman. I was very proud to speak in recognition of the fundamental contributions Sojourner made to the cause of the abolition of slavery, the establishment of equal rights for women and several other significant social reform and human justice movements in the 19th Century. This ceremony had in attendance many of Sojourner’s descendants, which made the event an occasion to engage in wonderful conversation. Sojourner lived in Battle Creek from 1857 until her death on Nov. 26, 1883, and is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery.

I met with the Battle Creek Unlimited Search Committee this past week as we began our discussions on the process to be followed on the hiring of the executive head of Battle Creek Unlimited. In an effort to keep transparency in the process, a joint press release will be issued between Battle Creek Unlimited and the Mayor’s Office.

A very interesting public information meeting was held by the Michigan Department of Transportation on Nov. 24 on a proposed roundabout interchange configuration at Exit 92 at BL-94 and I-94. The Michigan Department of Transportation provided an opportunity to discuss details of the concept of roundabouts at Exit 92 as part of a bridge replacement project planned for next year. It is one of many concepts being considered and MDOT invited and encouraged public comments. This is a highly-traveled area for those navigating into the Industrial Park, with approximately 4,900 vehicles taking Skyline to Fort Custer. These roundabouts are designed to easily accommodate private and commercial vehicles alike. Roundabouts include lower maintenance costs and fewer accidents, especially those more serious accidents, as this type of configuration requires lower speeds.

I had a very interesting tour and briefing with Captain Mike Fleisher at Battle Creek Fire Station No. 1, which included a tour of the Hazardous Materials Response Team's equipment of the Battle Creek Fire Department. The Fire Department and the Police Department work in close partnership in securing Homeland Security grants to maintain their state-of-the-art equipment to deal with hazardous material issues, explosives, chemicals, radiological and weapons of mass destruction. Twenty-three members of the Fire Department are engaged and being trained in Haz-Mat, working toward certification as a Technician, Specialist or Team Leader. Through the successful procurement of grants, personal safety and detection equipment has been secured to make certain if a member of team is in a situation of unknown dangers, that they can be immediately advised, including immediate notification of an unknown substance. Battle Creek has been called to neighboring communities due to their being highly respected in the field.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah G. Owens

Deborah G. Owens, Mayor